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(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PROTECTIVE SEATING**

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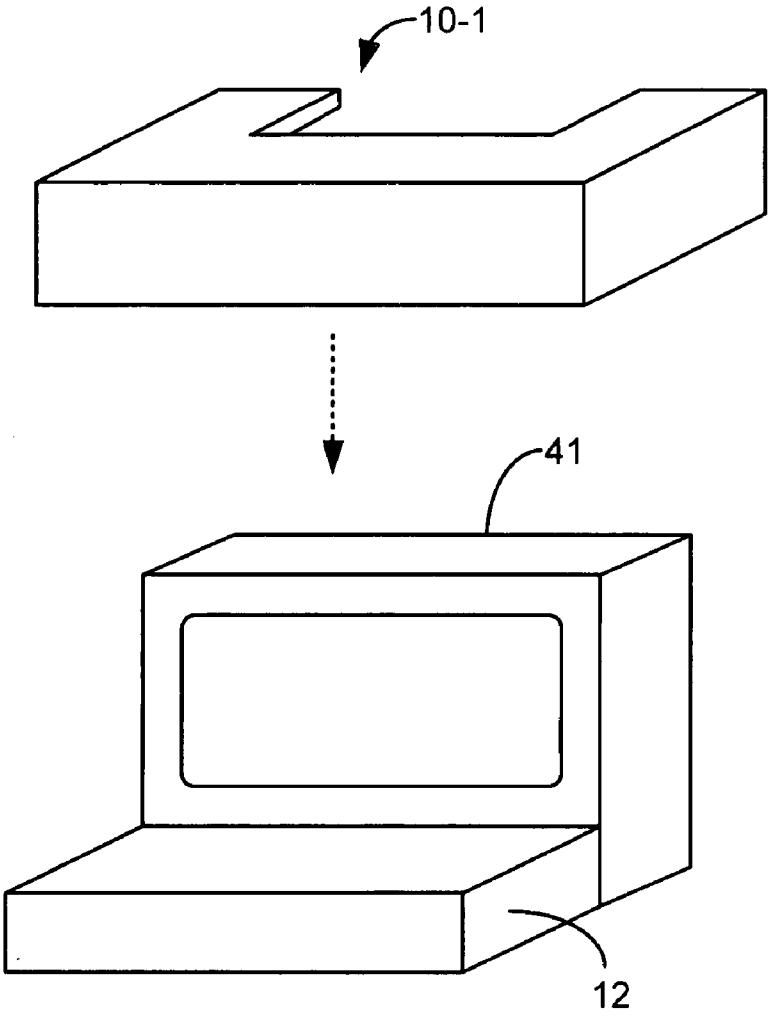
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **126/547**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for covering a fireplace hearth includes: lifting a hearth guard, said hearth guard comprising a frame having at least four inner surfaces including a first inner surface, a second inner surface, a third inner surface, and a fourth inner surface; and placing the hearth guard on a fireplace hearth having at least four outer surfaces; wherein the first inner surface faces an opposing direction as the second inner surface; wherein the third and the fourth inner surfaces are orthogonal to each other and to the first and the second inner surfaces; and wherein when hearth guard is configured to be placed on the fireplace hearth such that each of the four surfaces of the frame faces an opposing direction of a respective outer surface of the fireplace hearth.



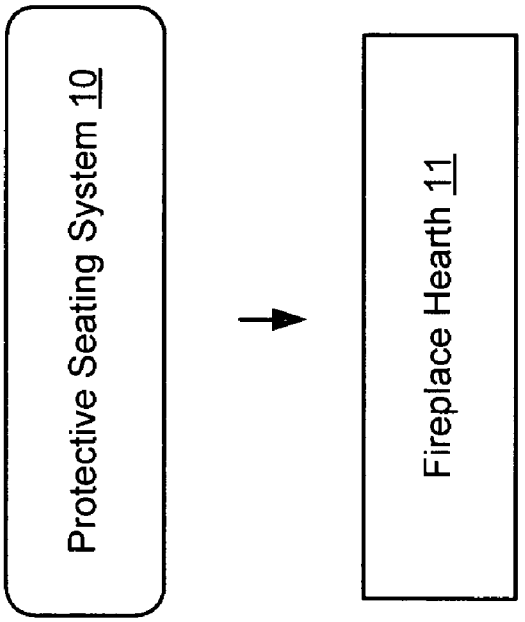

Protective Seating System 10
Fireplace Hearth 11

FIG. 1A

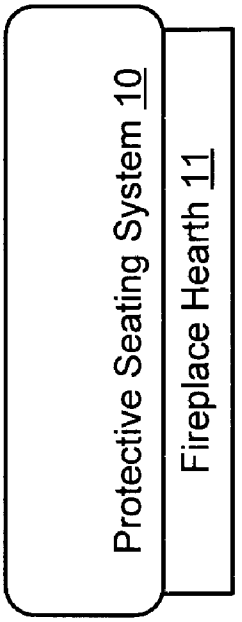

Protective Seating System 10
Fireplace Hearth 11

FIG. 1B

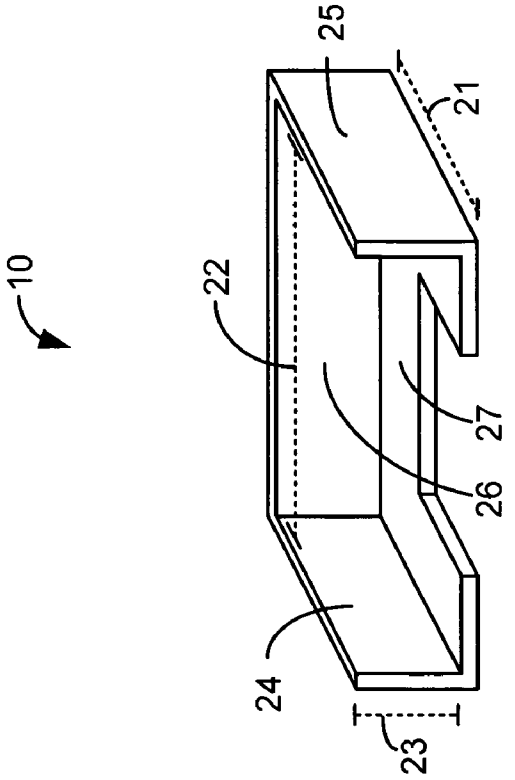


FIG. 2B

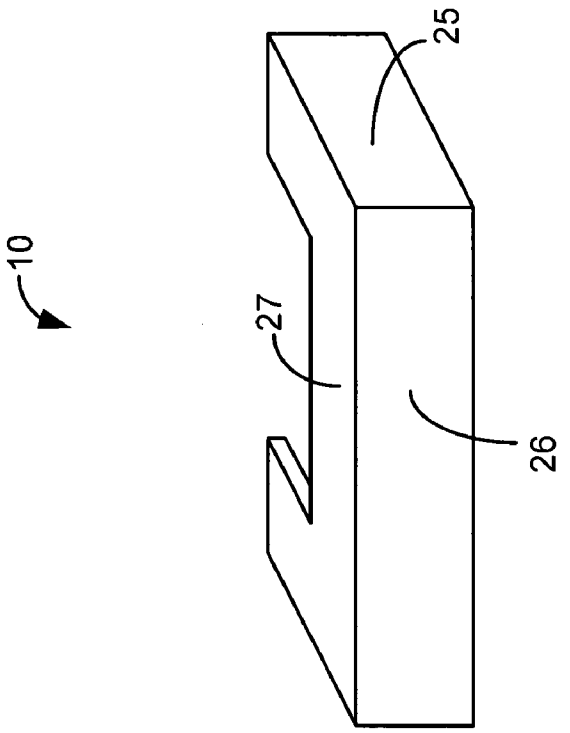


FIG. 2A

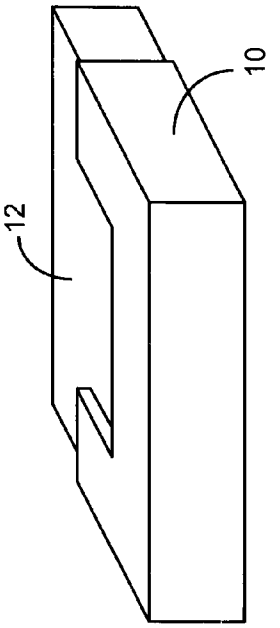


FIG. 3B

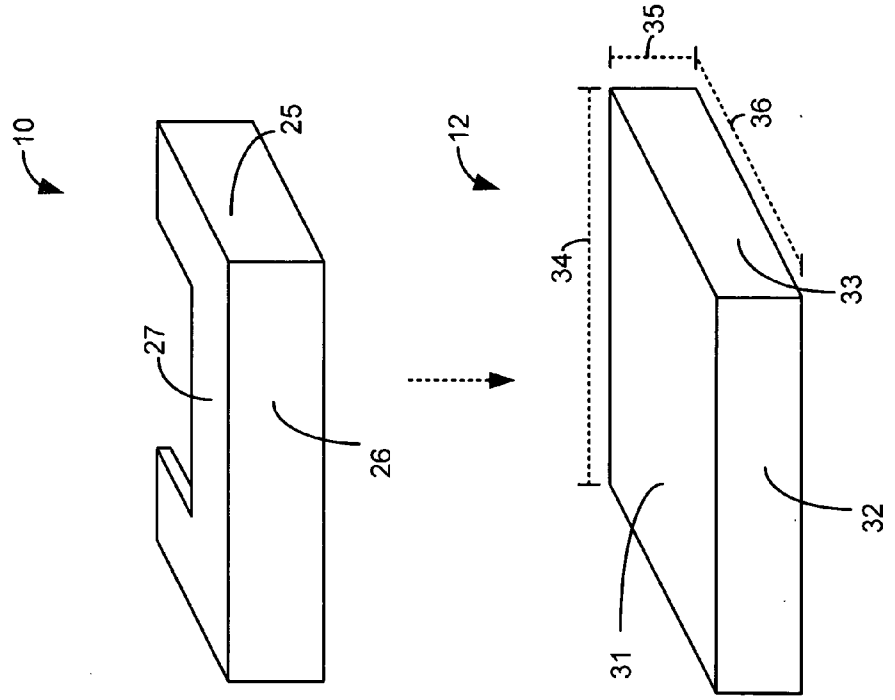


FIG. 3A

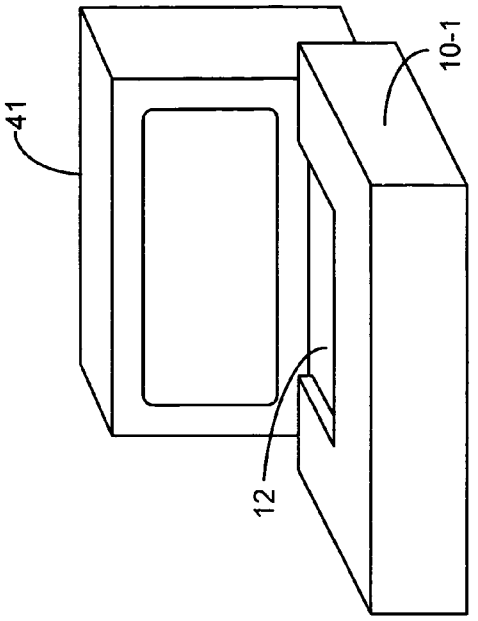


FIG. 4B

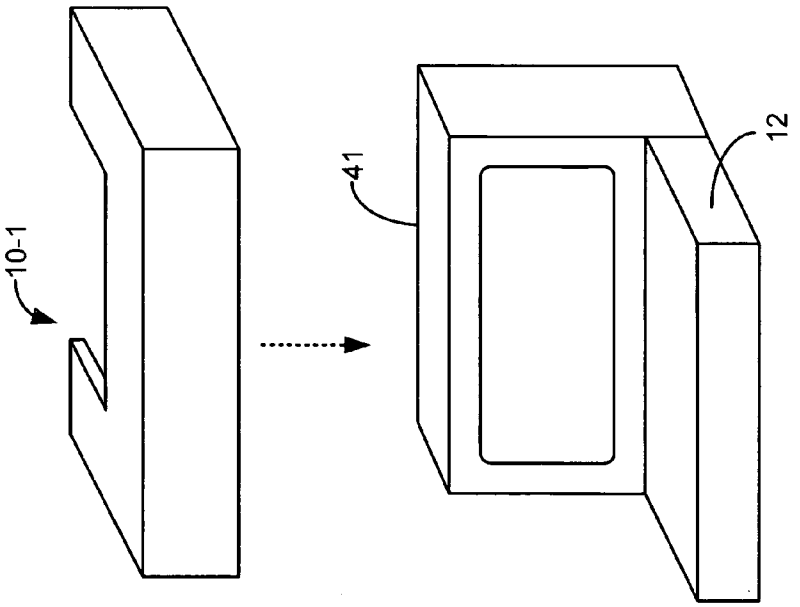


FIG. 4A

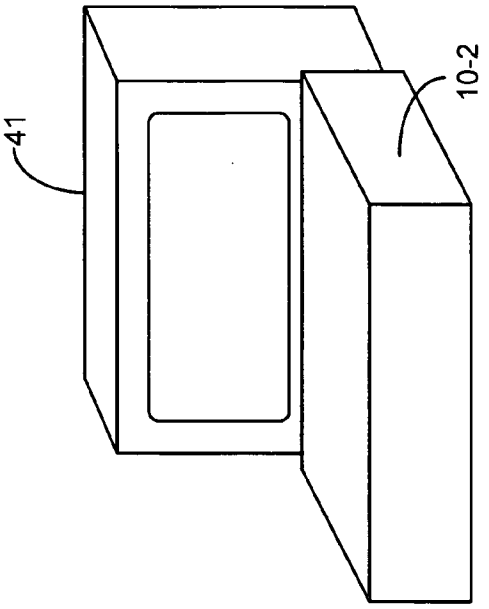


FIG. 4D

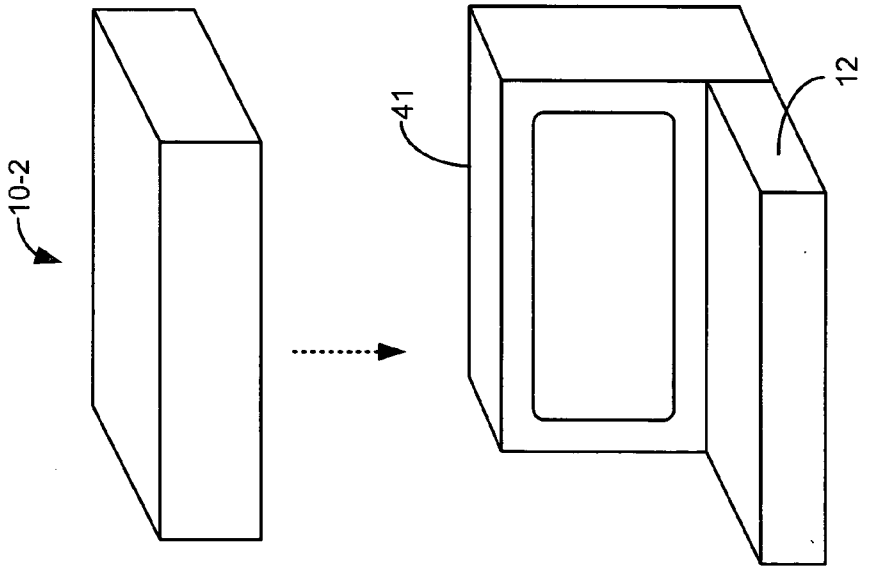


FIG. 4C

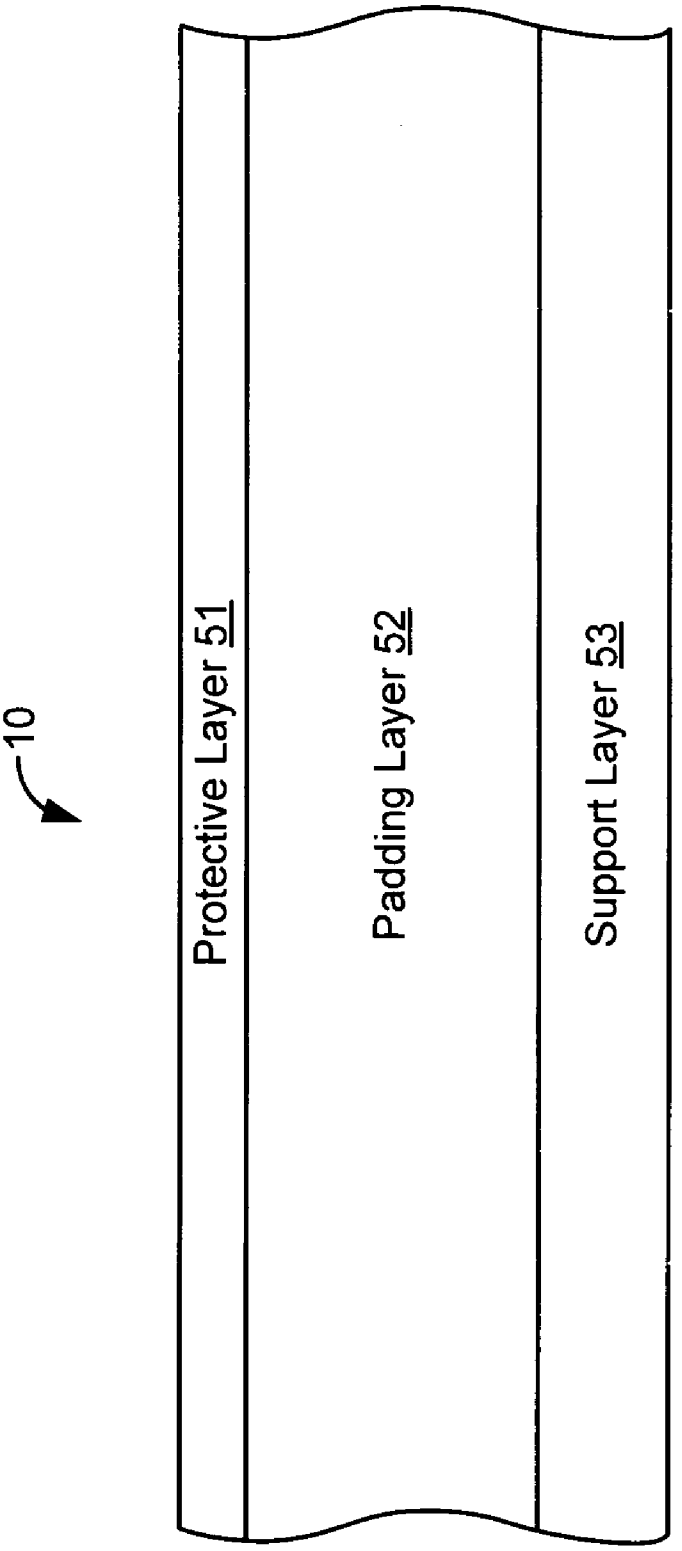


FIG. 5

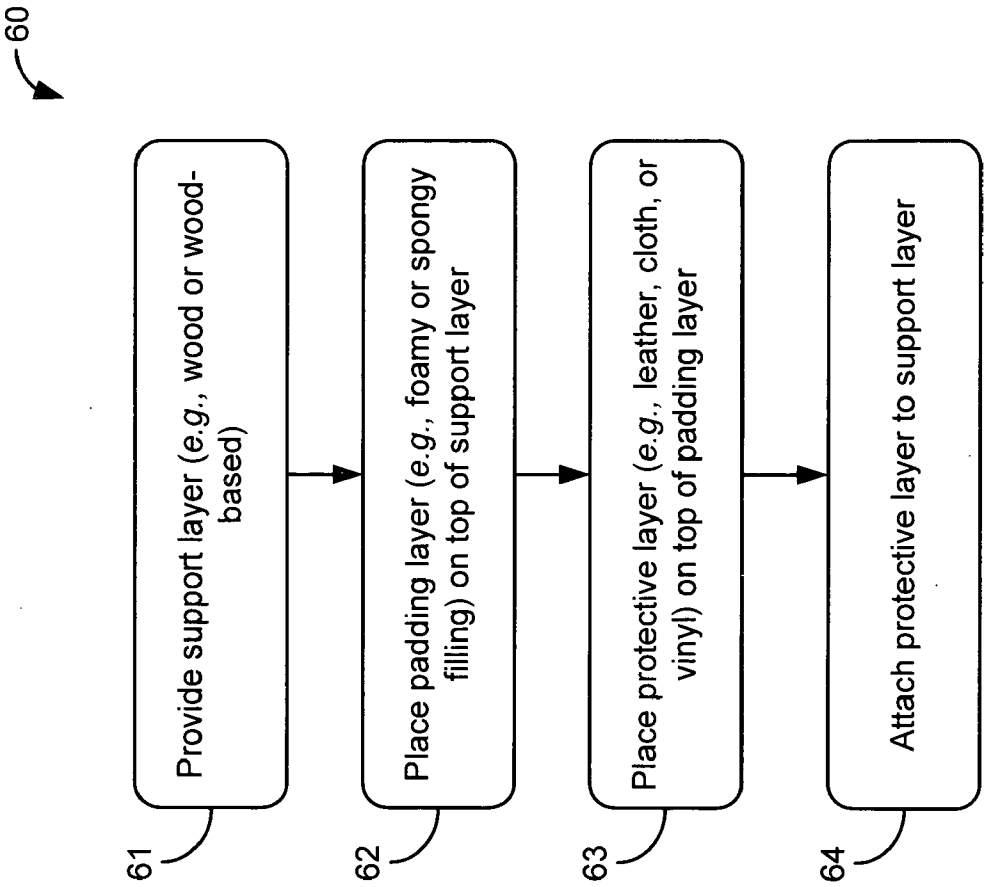

60
Provide support layer (e.g., wood or wood-based)
Place padding layer (e.g., foamy or spongy filling) on top of support layer
Place protective layer (e.g., leather, cloth, or vinyl) on top of padding layer
Attach protective layer to support layer
61
62
63
64

FIG. 6

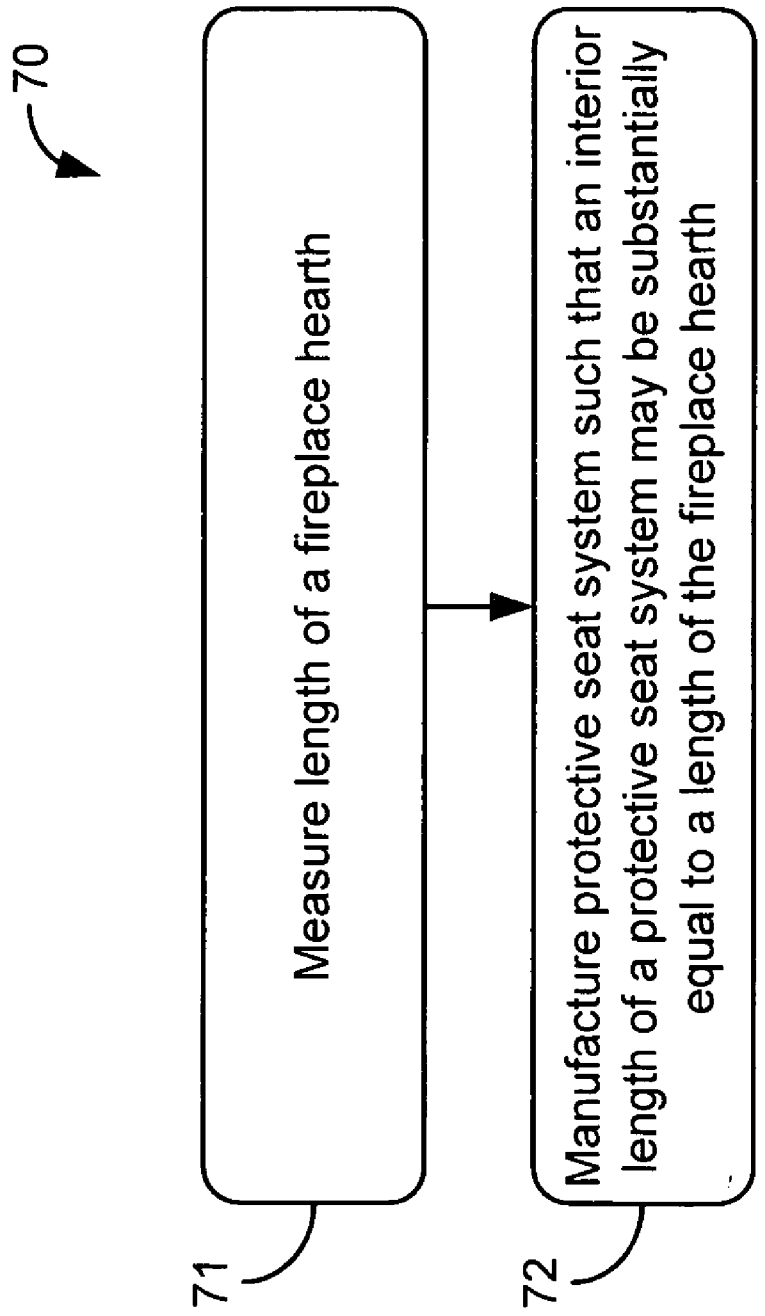

70
Measure length of a fireplace hearth
71
Manufacture protective seat system such that an interior length of a protective seat system may be substantially equal to a length of the fireplace hearth
72

FIG. 7

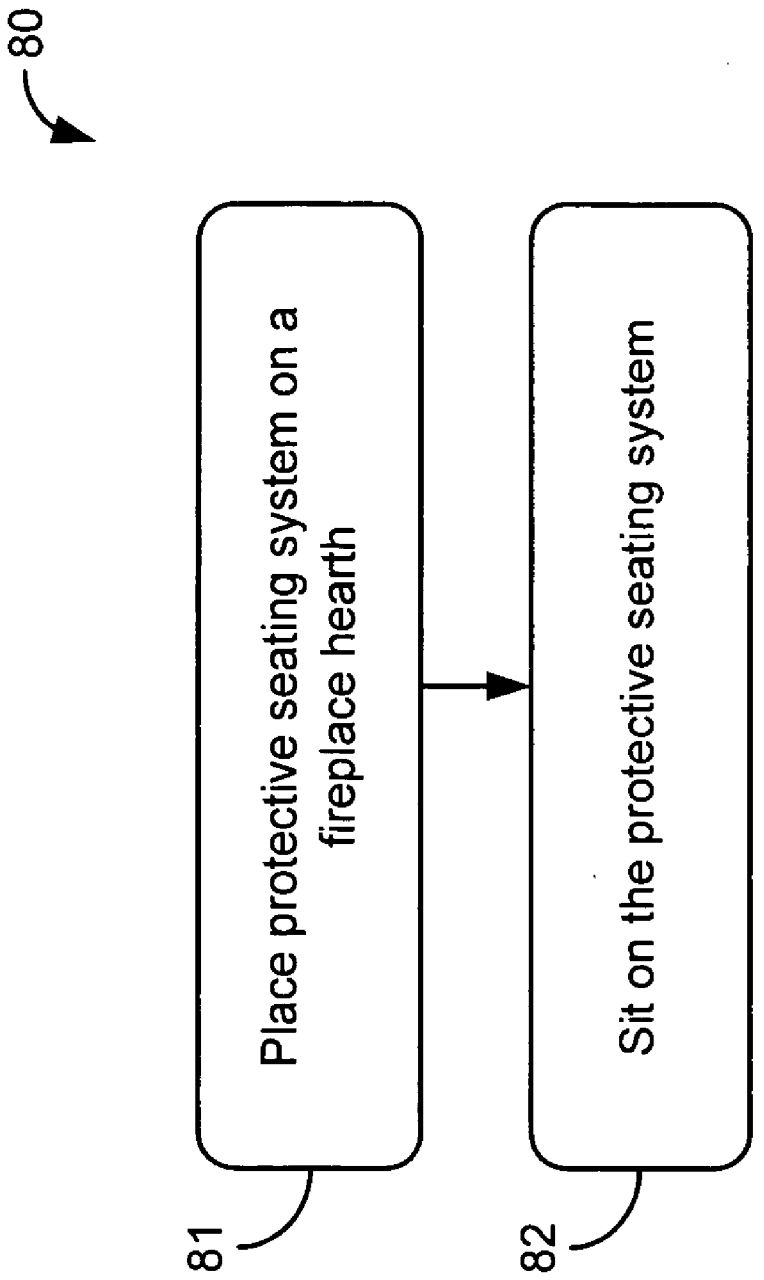

80
Place protective seating system on a fireplace hearth
Sit on the protective seating system
81
82

FIG. 8

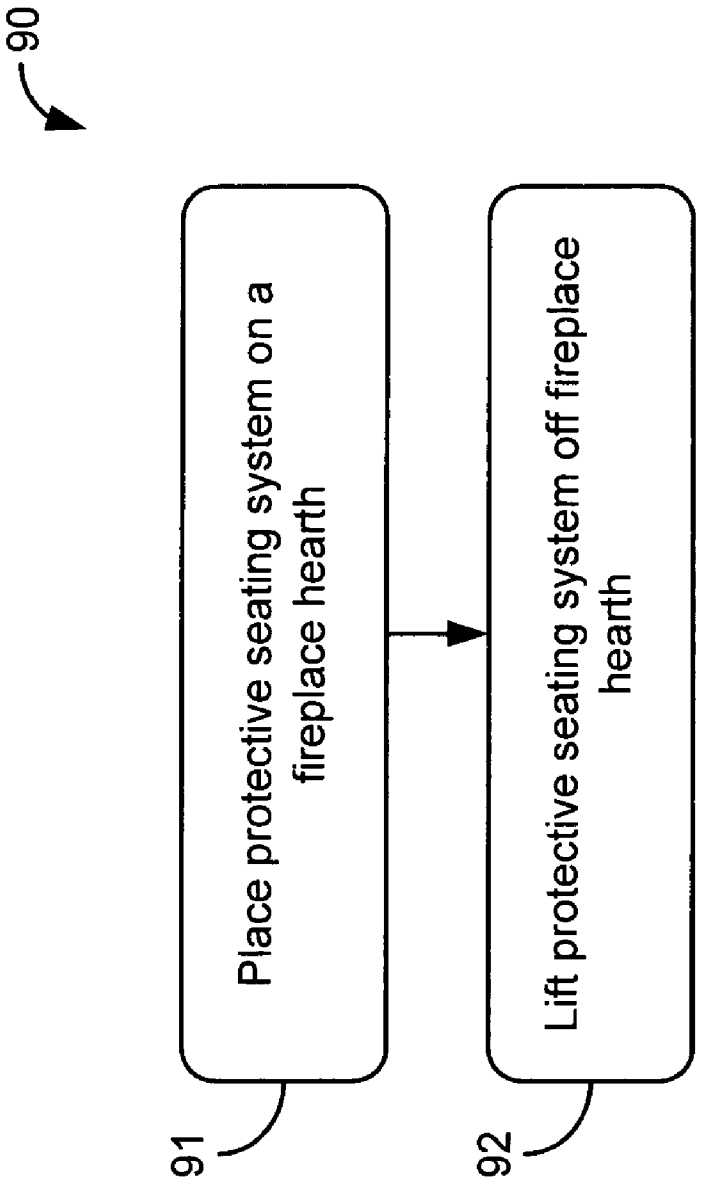

90
Place protective seating system on a fireplace hearth
Lift protective seating system off fireplace hearth
91
92

FIG. 9

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PROTECTIVE SEATING

BACKGROUND

[0001] Fireplace hearths are typically made of concrete and/or bricks and are therefore uncomfortable to sit on and pose a hazard to children that might fall and hit their heads on such hearths. Therefore there exists a need for systems and methods that address these and/or other problems related to fireplace hearths.

SUMMARY

[0002] Systems and methods for protective seating are provided. An embodiment of a method for covering a fireplace hearth includes: lifting a hearth guard, said hearth guard comprising a frame having at least four inner surfaces including a first inner surface, a second inner surface, a third inner surface, and a fourth inner surface; and placing the hearth guard on a fireplace hearth having at least four outer surfaces; wherein the first inner surface faces an opposing direction as the second inner surface; wherein the third and the fourth inner surfaces are orthogonal to each other and to the first and the second inner surfaces; and wherein when hearth guard is configured to be placed on the fireplace hearth such that each of the four surfaces of the frame faces an opposing direction of a respective outer surface of the fireplace hearth.

[0003] An embodiment of a method for providing a hearth guard includes: measuring a length of a fireplace hearth; and providing a hearth guard having dimensions that are responsive to dimensions of the fireplace hearth, said hearth guard comprising a frame having at least four inner surfaces including a first inner surface, a second inner surface, a third inner surface, and a fourth inner surface; wherein the heart guard also comprises a padding layer and a protective later, said padding layer being located between the frame and the protective layer; and wherein the protective layer covers at least a portion of the hearth guard exterior; wherein the first inner surface faces an opposing direction as the second inner surface; wherein the third and the fourth inner surfaces are orthogonal to each other and to the first and the second inner surfaces; wherein a distance between the first and the second inner surfaces is greater than or equal to the length of the fireplace hearth; and wherein when hearth guard is configured to be placed on the fireplace hearth such that each of the four surfaces of the frame faces an opposing direction of a respective outer surface of the fireplace hearth.

[0004] A system for covering a fireplace hearth includes: a frame having at least four inner surfaces including a first inner surface, a second inner surface, a third inner surface, and a fourth inner surface, said system configured to at least partially cover the fireplace hearth; a padding layer; and a protective layer; wherein said padding layer is located between the frame and the protective layer; wherein the protective layer covers at least a portion of the system's exterior; wherein said fireplace hearth has at least four outer surfaces; wherein each of said four outer surfaces is orthogonal to two surfaces of said four outer surface; wherein the first inner surface faces an opposing direction as the second inner surface; wherein the third and the fourth inner surfaces are orthogonal to each other and to the first and the second inner surfaces; wherein said system is configured to be placed on the fireplace hearth such that each of the four inner surfaces of the frame faces an opposing direction of a respective outer surface of the fireplace hearth.

[0005] Other systems, methods, features and advantages of the invention will be or will become apparent to one with skill in the art upon examination of the following figures and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional systems, methods, features and advantages be included within this description, be within the scope of the invention, and be protected by the claims (currently or subsequently presented).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] Many aspects of the invention can be better understood with reference to the following drawings. The components in the drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon clearly illustrating the principles of the present invention. Moreover, in the drawings, like reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the several views.

[0007] FIG. **1**A depicts a conceptual block diagram of a protective seating system prior to placement on a fireplace hearth.

[0008] FIG. **1**B depicts a conceptual block diagram of a protective seating system on a fireplace hearth.

[0009] FIG. **2**A depicts an exterior perspective view of an example embodiment of a protective seating system.

[0010] FIG. **2**B depicts an interior perspective view of an example embodiment of a protective seating system.

[0011] FIG. **3**A depicts an embodiment of a protective seating system and a fireplace hearth.

[0012] FIG. **3**B depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system on a fireplace hearth.

[0013] FIG. **4**A depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system prior to placement on a fireplace hearth.

[0014] FIG. **4**B depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system on a fireplace hearth.

[0015] FIG. **4**C depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system prior to placement on a fireplace hearth.

[0016] FIG. **4**D depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system on a fireplace hearth.

[0017] FIG. **5** depicts an embodiment of the layers of a protective seating system.

[0018] FIG. **6** depicts a method for manufacturing a protective seating system.

[0019] FIG. **7** depicts a method for implementing a protective seating system.

[0020] FIG. **8** depicts a method for utilizing a protective seating system.

[0021] FIG. **9** depicts a method for lifting a protective seating system off of a fireplace hearth.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0022] As will be described in greater detail herein, an embodiment of the present invention comprises systems and methods for a protective seating system on a fireplace hearth. The protective seating system protects against fire via a fire resistant protective layer, protects against the hard surface of the fireplace hearth via a padding layer, and provides a seat on top of the fireplace hearth. The protective seating system is placed on top of the fireplace hearth. The protective seating system uses the fireplace hearth for support for seating while providing a protective cover against fire and the hard surface. The protective system may be manufactured to be substantially equal to the fireplace hearth and is placed on top of the hearth.

[0023] Referring now to the drawings, FIG. **1** A depicts a conceptual block diagram of a protective seating system **10** prior to placement on a fireplace hearth **11**. The fireplace hearth **11** is the part of a fireplace that extends out on the ground. The fireplace hearth **11** may, for example, comprise bricks, rocks, concrete, or any other suitable material.

[0024] FIG. **1**B depicts a conceptual block diagram of a protective seating system **10** on a fireplace hearth **11**. The protective seating system **10** is configured to fit on the fireplace hearth **11** opposite the surfaces of the fireplace hearth **11**.

[0025] FIG. **2**A depicts an exterior perspective view of an example embodiment of a protective seating system **10**. The protective seating system **10** comprises a top **27**, a front **26**, a side **25**, and an opposite side **24** (FIG. **2**B). The top **27** may, for example, be shaped as a 'U' to expose a portion of the top surface of a fireplace hearth, or it may, for example, substantially cover the top surface of a fireplace hearth.

[0026] FIG. **2**B depicts an interior perspective view of an example embodiment of a protective seating system **10**. The protective seating system **10** comprises a top **27**, a front **26**, a side **24**, and a side **25**. The protective seating system **10** comprises an interior length **22**, a height **23** and a depth **21**. The interior length **22** of the protective seating system **10** may be substantially greater than the depth **21** or the height **23**. The length **22**, the height **23**, and the depth **21** of the protective seating system **10** may be measured and set responsive to the dimensions of a fireplace hearth.

[0027] FIG. **3**A depicts an embodiment of a protective seating system **10** and a fireplace hearth **11**. The fireplace hearth comprises a top **31**, a front **32**, and a side **33**. The fireplace hearth **11** has dimensions of a length **34**, a height **35**, and a depth **36**. The protective seating system **10** comprises a top **27**, a front **26**, and a side **25**. The depth **21** (FIG. **2**B) of the protective seating system **10** may be set substantially equal to the depth **36** of the fireplace hearth **11**. The height **23** (FIG. **2**B) of the protective seating system **10** may be set substantially equal to or less than the height **35** of the fireplace hearth **11**. The interior length **22** (FIG. **2**B) of the protective seating system **10** may be set substantially equal to the length **34** of the fireplace hearth **11**.

[0028] FIG. **3**B depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system **10** on a fireplace hearth **11**. In this example, the protective seating system **10** covers at least a portion of the front and the sides of the fireplace hearth **11** with an opening on the top of the protective seating system **10** to expose a portion of the top surface of the fireplace hearth **11**.

[0029] FIG. **4**A depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system **10-1** prior to placement on a fireplace hearth **11**. The fireplace hearth **11** extends out from a fireplace **41** and may, for example, comprise brick, rock, concrete, and/or any other suitable material. The protective seating system **10-1** may have a length, a depth, and a height customized based on the dimensions of the fireplace hearth **11**.

[0030] FIG. **4**B depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system **10-1** on a fireplace hearth **11**. The protective seating system **10-1** has surfaces that respectively oppose the top, the front, and the sides of the fireplace hearth **11**. The fireplace hearth **11** provides support for the protective seating system **10**. The interior length, depth, and height of the protective seating system **10-1** may be set such that the protective seating system **10-1** fits tightly on the fireplace hearth **11**. A top view of the protective seating system **10-1** may depict a U shape that exposes a portion of the top surface of the fireplace hearth **11**.

[0031] FIG. **4**C depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system **10-2** prior to placement on a fireplace hearth **11**. The fireplace hearth **11** extends out from a fireplace **41** and may, for example, comprise bricks, rock, concrete, and/or any other suitable material. The protective seating system **10-2** may have a length, a depth, and a height customized based on dimensions the fireplace hearth **11**.

[0032] FIG. **4**D depicts an example embodiment of a protective seating system **10-2** on a fireplace hearth **11**. The protective seating system **10-2** has surfaces that respectively oppose the top, the front, and the sides of the fireplace hearth **11**. The fireplace hearth **11** provides support for the protective seating system **10-2**. The interior length, depth, and height of the protective seating system **10-2** may be set such that the protective seating system **10-2** fits tightly on the fireplace hearth **11**. The top surface of the protective seating system **10-2** covers substantially the entire top surface of the fireplace hearth **11**.

[0033] FIG. **5** depicts an embodiment of the layers of a protective seating system **10**. The protective seating system **10** comprises a protective layer **51**, a padding layer **52**, and a support layer **53**. The protective layer **51** may comprise flexible material such as, for example, leather, cloth, or vinyl. In one embodiment the protective layer **51** may comprise a fire resistant material. The padding layer **52** may comprise compressible material such as, for example, foam, sponge, or any other suitable material. The support layer **53** may comprise relatively inflexible material such as, for example, wood. The padding layer **52** is located between the support layer **53** and the protective layer **51**. The protective layer **51** may be attached to the support layer **53** (e.g., stapled) to enclose the padding layer **51**.

[0034] FIG. **6** depicts a method **60** for manufacturing a protective seating system. The method **60** comprises providing a support layer (e.g., wood) (step **61**); placing a padding layer (e.g., foam or sponge) on top of the support layer (step **62**); placing a protective layer (e.g., leather, cloth, vinyl) on top of the padding layer (step **63**); and attaching a protective layer to the support layer (step **64**).

[0035] FIG. **7** depicts a method **70** for implementing a protective seating system. The method **70** comprises measuring a length of a fireplace hearth (step **71**) and manufacturing a protective seating system such that the interior length of the protective seating system is substantially equal to a length of the fireplace hearth (step **72**).

[0036] FIG. **8** depicts a method **80** for utilizing a protective seating system. The method **80** comprises placing the protective seating system on a fireplace hearth (step **81**), and sitting on the protective seating system (step **82**).

[0037] FIG. **9** depicts a method **90** for lifting a protective seating system off of a fireplace hearth. The method **90** comprises placing the protective seating system on a fireplace hearth (step **91**), and lifting the protective seating system off the fireplace hearth (i.e., when desired or when no longer utilized) (step **92**).

[0038] It should be emphasized that the above-described embodiments of the present invention are merely possible examples, among others, of the implementations, setting forth a clear understanding of the principles of the invention. Many variations and modifications may be made to the above-described embodiments of the invention without departing substantially from the principles of the invention. All such modifications and variations are intended to be included herein within the scope of the disclosure and present invention.

1. A method for covering a fireplace hearth, said method comprising:

lifting a hearth guard, said hearth guard comprising a frame having at least four inner surfaces including a first inner surface, a second inner surface, a third inner surface, and a fourth inner surface; and

placing the hearth guard on a fireplace hearth having at least four outer surfaces;

wherein the first inner surface faces an opposing direction as the second inner surface;

wherein the third and the fourth inner surfaces are orthogonal to each other and to the first and the second inner surfaces; and

wherein the hearth guard is configured to be placed on the fireplace hearth such that each of the four surfaces of the frame faces an opposing direction of a respective outer surface of the fireplace hearth.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the heart guard also comprises a padding layer and a protective later, said padding layer being located between the frame and the protective layer; and wherein the protective layer covers at least a portion of the hearth guard exterior.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the padding layer comprises at least one of polyester fiber, sponge, and cotton fiber.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the protective layer comprises at least one of leather, cotton, vinyl, and polyester.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the protective layer is thinner than the padding layer.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein the protective layer is less flammable than the padding layer.

7. The method of claim 2, wherein the protective layer is less flammable than the frame.

8. A method for providing a hearth guard comprising:

measuring a length of a fireplace hearth; and

providing a hearth guard having dimensions that are responsive to dimensions of the fireplace hearth, said hearth guard comprising a frame having at least four inner surfaces including a first inner surface, a second inner surface, a third inner surface, and a fourth inner surface;

wherein the heart guard also comprises a padding layer and a protective later, said padding layer being located between the frame and the protective layer; and wherein the protective layer covers at least a portion of the hearth guard exterior;

wherein the first inner surface faces an opposing direction as the second inner surface;

wherein the third and the fourth inner surfaces are orthogonal to each other and to the first and the second inner surfaces;

wherein a distance between the first and the second inner surfaces is greater than or equal to the length of the fireplace hearth; and

wherein the hearth guard is configured to be placed on the fireplace hearth such that each of the four surfaces of the frame faces an opposing direction of a respective outer surface of the fireplace hearth.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the distance between the first and the second inner surfaces of said hearth guard is at least ¼ inch greater than the length of the fireplace hearth.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the padding layer comprises at least one of polyester fiber, sponge filling, and cotton fiber.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the protective layer comprises at least one of leather, cotton, vinyl, and polyester.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein the protective layer is thinner than the padding layer.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein the protective layer is less flammable than the padding layer.

14. The method of claim 9, wherein the protective layer is less flammable than the frame.

15. A system for covering a fireplace hearth, said system comprising:

a frame having at least four inner surfaces including a first inner surface, a second inner surface, a third inner surface, and a fourth inner surface, said system configured to at least partially cover the fireplace hearth;

a padding layer; and

a protective layer;

wherein said padding layer is located between the frame and the protective layer;

wherein the protective layer covers at least a portion of the system's exterior;

wherein said fireplace hearth has at least four outer surfaces;

wherein each of said four outer surfaces is orthogonal to two surfaces of said four outer surface;

wherein the first inner surface faces an opposing direction as the second inner surface;

wherein the third and the fourth inner surfaces are orthogonal to each other and to the first and the second inner surfaces;

wherein said system is configured to be placed on the fireplace hearth such that each of the four inner surfaces of the frame faces an opposing direction of a respective outer surface of the fireplace hearth.

16. The system of claim 16, wherein the padding layer comprises at least one of polyester fiber, sponge, and cotton fiber.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the protective layer comprises at least one of leather, cotton, vinyl, and polyester.

18. The system of claim 16, wherein the protective layer is thinner than the padding layer.

19. The system of claim 16, wherein the protective layer is less flammable than the padding layer; and the protective layer is less flammable than the frame.

* * * * *